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A HISTORY

OF THE

COUNTY OF SCHENECTADY.

SCHENECTADY:
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1887

SCHENECTADY COUNTY

Scale 2 miles to 1 inch

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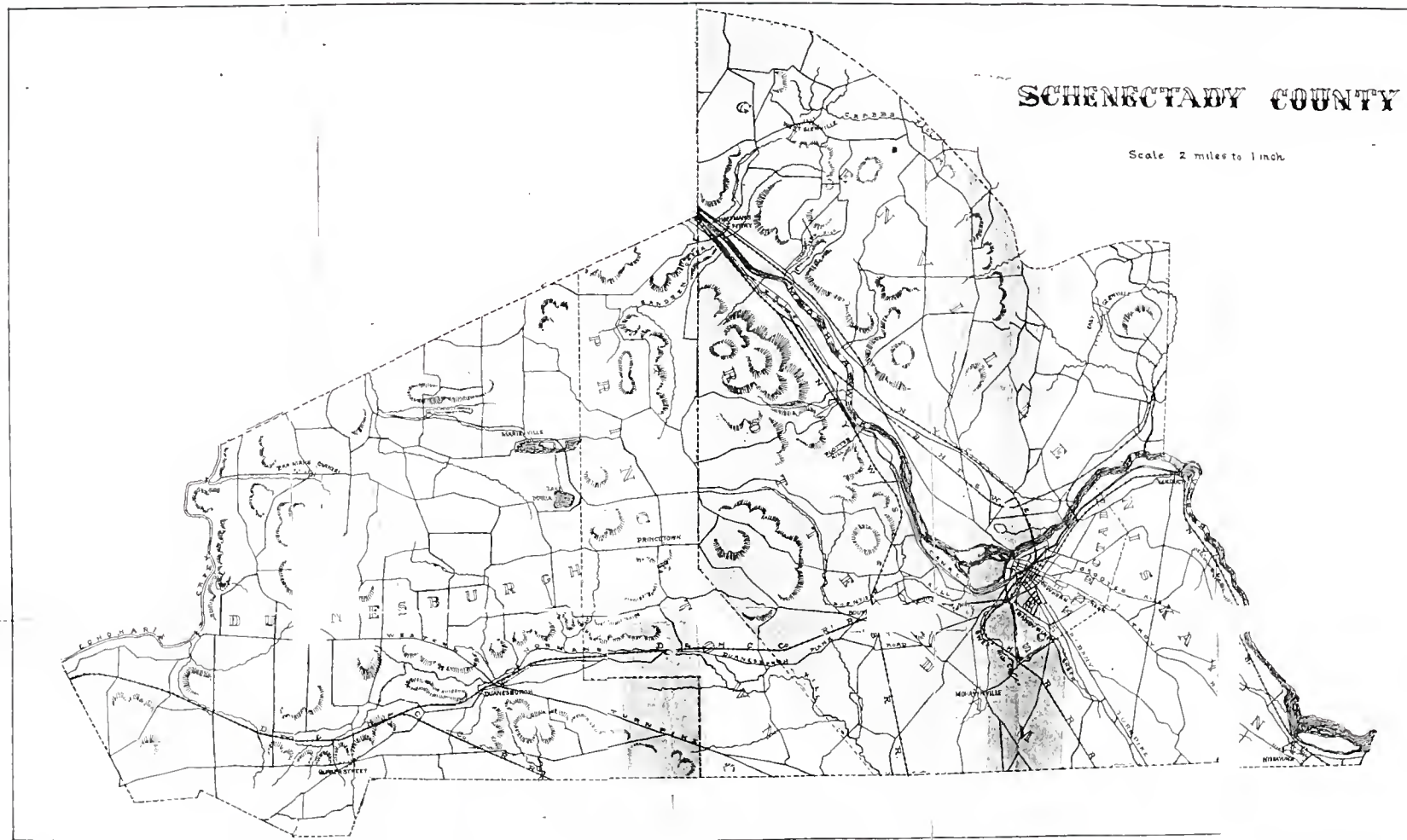
SCHENECTADY COUNTY
Scale 2 miles to 1 inch
DUANESBURGH
PRINCETOWN
GLENVILLE
NISKAYUNA
ROTTERDAM
SCHENECTADY

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HISTORY OF SCHENECTADY COUNTY.

CHAPTER I.

Geography and Early History.

Schenectady County was formed from Albany County, March 7, 1809. It is bounded by the following adjacent counties: on the north, by Montgomery and Saratoga; on the east, by Saratoga and Albany; on the south, by Albany and Schoharie; on the west, by Schoharie and Montgomery. In shape it is very irregular. A line across the county, in its widest part, would be drawn from the south-east corner of Niskayuna to a point on the Schoharie Creek, near the south-west corner of Duanesburgh and would be about 28 miles long. The Mohawk River flows in a general south-easterly direction through the county and forms a part of its north-eastern border. Besides this river, the principal streams are Schoharie Creek, Norman's Kill, and their tributaries. The city of

Schenectady and the towns of Niskayuna, Rotterdam, Princetown, and Duanesburgh are on the south side of the river, and Glenville is on the north side. The area of the county is 124,021 acres, or about 194 square miles, of which the city of Schenectady has 2,875 acres, or about 4½ square miles; Duanesburgh has 42,875 acres; Glenville, 30,094; Rotterdam, 23,377; Niskayuna, 9,904; Princetown, 14,895.

The surface of the northern and western parts of the county is much broken by hills and valleys. Towereuna hill, in the extreme south western corner of Glenville, rises abruptly from the river and is, perhaps, 300 feet in height. Other high hills are in the north-western part of Rotterdam, along the river, and are of about the same height. The highest land in the county is in the neighborhood of Mariaville, and is about 1,000 feet above the water in the Mohawk. The south-east part of the county is mostly level and sandy. The bottom-lands along the river are widest a short distance west of the city limits, where they are about three miles wide, varying thence westward from a few rods to a mile in width. The underlying rock through the county is, generally, Hudson shales, while in some places birdseye limestone is found. The greater part of the surface is covered with a thick deposit of drift,

consisting principally of clay in the west part, and sand in the east. The principal agricultural products of the county are hay, oats, rye, corn, and potatoes. Broom-corn was for many years very extensively cultivated, but of recent years it has declined in importance, owing to western competition. The exact location of the Union College dome, in the city of Schenectady, is in north latitude 42° 49′ 01″, and west longitude (from Greenwich) 73° 55′ 50″. The name Schenectady is derived from Schau-naugh-ta-da, which in the language of the Iroquois signifies "over the pine plains," or "across the pine plains," and is said to have been used by them at first to designate Fort Orange (now Albany). The Dutch afterward applied it to the place where Schenectady now stands, as being over the plains from Albany. By the census of 1880, the population of Schenectady city was 13,655; of the county, 23,558. The population of the city is at present (July, 1887) estimated at 20,000.

The earliest European settlers of Schenectady County came from the Netherlands. They were descended from a noble race, their ancestors, even as far back as to the times of the Romans, having been distinguished for their brave spirit and love of liberty. During a large part of the middle ages, the Netherlands were

divided into a number of feudal principalities, whose chieftains held a nominal allegiance to the German emperors or the kings of France. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Netherlands, then comprising what is now Holland and Belgium, had between two and three hundred walled cities, numerous towns and villages, and a population of three millions. The great cities grew in wealth and power, chiefly by manufactures and commerce. Having acquired chartered rights, they became in reality city republics, regulating their own local affairs, choosing their own magistrates, and sending their representatives to the general assembly of the provinces.

When their rights were invaded by the Emperor Charles V. and his successors on the throne of Spain, they made a brave resistance, and in 1579 the northern portion of the country united in a permanent confederation, known as "The Seven United Provinces of the Netherlands." Thus was laid the foundation of the Dutch Republic. The heroic struggle for civil and religious liberty was continued by the Netherlanders for thirty years longer, until it resulted in the acknowledgment of their independence in 1609.

In that memorable year, Henry Hudson, an English navigator, then in the service of the Dutch East India

Company, discovered the river that is now called by his name. Sailing up this river for about 150 miles, he took possession of the country in the name of the States-General of Holland. To the territory which they had thus acquired the Dutch gave the name of New Netherlands. In 1613 they erected a few buildings on Manhattan Island, where New York city now stands. In 1614 they built a fort and storehouse on a little island just below Albany, and in 1623 they built Fort Orange on the site where the city of Albany now stands.

The early history of Schenectady County is interwoven with that of the native Indians found in this part of North America. These belonged to two great families, the Algonquin and the Iroquois. The latter were distinguished for their intelligence and warlike spirit. They formed a confederation of five tribes, the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas, to which was added later, in 1714, the tribe of the Tuscaroras. In the contests waged by rival European nations for the possession of this country, the Iroquois were hostile to the French, and friendly to the Dutch and the English. In 1618, they made with the Dutch a treaty of peace, which was long and faithfully observed on both sides. The Dutch, always intent upon traffic, secured the rich fur trade. In exchange for furs the

Indians received European trinkets, fire-water and fire-arms.

Among the confederated Indian tribes, the Mohawks were the most powerful. Along the banks of the Mohawk River they had five fortified posts, called castles, one of them at the mouth of the river, another at Schenectady, and others farther west. They claimed ownership in the soil extending still more widely, northward to Canada, eastward to the Hudson, and southward to the Catskills.

In 1621 the Dutch West India Company was chartered by the States-General of Holland, and invested with almost absolute authority over the New Netherlands. At first, as their only object was trade, they made no effort to acquire possession of land, but afterward they concluded to attempt a more permanent occupation. For the purpose of encouraging colonization, the company gave to any of its members who would buy land from the Indians and form a colony of fifty persons nearly absolute control of such land and the colonists. These owners were called patroons, and they acquired very extensive landed property. One of them, Killian Van Rensselaer, owned a tract of land containing over 700,000 acres, including all of the present county of Albany and the greater part of the counties of Rensse-

laer and Columbia. This large estate was named Rensselaerwyck, and the name of Beaverwyck was applied to the district, or hamlet, which included Fort Orange. Van Rensselaer did not himself come over to this country, but intrusted the care of his colony to Arendt Van Curler (or Corlaer), who came to this country in 1630, and under whose able management the colony was greatly prospered.

As Arendt Van Curler subsequently became the founder of Schenectady and left upon the men and institutions of his day the permanent impress of his character, it is proper here to describe his character and deeds. We find in him a most worthy illustration of the sterling traits inherited from a noble ancestry. To a mind of great natural strength and energy he added a firm will, a cultivated intellect, high moral purpose, unyielding integrity, along with persuasive power and large practical knowledge. It was his to place himself on the side of right, and then to win others to that side. These qualities commanded for him the respect and won the love of the civilized European and the uncivilized Indian. So highly was he regarded by the Indian tribes that after his day they applied his name, Corlaer, as the official title of respect by which they addressed the governors of New York. In the lexicon of the Iroquois

language it is stated that their word *kora* is derived from the name of the celebrated Arendt Van Corlaer, that it was applied as a title to the Dutch governors of Orange and New Amsterdam, afterward to the English governors of Albany and New York, and to all the governors of New England. The Governor-General of Canada is invested with this title of honor, and for Her Majesty, the Queen of Great Britain, they are accustomed to exalt more highly her glory by adding the epithet *kowa*, that is, "the great," so that Queen Victoria is styled, in the language of the Iroquois, *kora-kowa*, "the great Corlaer." Van Curler was a statesman of broad and comprehensive views. It was largely owing to his influence, in fact more to him than to any other one man, that the friendship of the powerful Iroquois was secured for the Dutch and the English, and thus the country came under a Germanic rather than a Latin race and civilization. With all his other admirable qualities he united a spirit of humanity that often found exercise in relieving the captives whom the Indians had taken. It was on an errand of mercy, to save some prisoners from their cruel captors, that he made in September, 1642, his first westward journey through the Mohawk valley. He was charmed with the country, and described it as "the fairest land the eyes of man ever rested upon."

In 1646, Killian Van Rensselaer died, leaving his colony in the hands of his son. Van Curler, then recently married, having obtained a farm in Rensselaerwyck, settled down in private life. But he always retained a liberal public spirit. Many of the settlers near Fort Orange were restive under the restrictions imposed upon them by the patroon. They wished to hold their lands, not by a feudal tenure, but in fee-simple, or absolute possession. This desire Van Curler shared with them.

In June, 1661, he with fourteen others applied to Governor Stuyvesant for permission to purchase from the Indians the "Great Flat," a tract of land on the lower Mohawk, including the present site of Schenectady. Permission having been obtained, the land was bought in the following month. The description given in the deed was somewhat indefinite, but the area comprised was comparatively small. The right of trading with the Indians was not granted till 1672, so that at first the settlers were restricted to agriculture.

The land thus acquired was apportioned among the original proprietors by giving to each of them a house-lot in the village, a farm on the Great Flat or on the islands, a pasture-ground east of the village, and a garden-lot on the west, near the Binne Kill. The original

village plat comprised only the area extending from the main Binne Kill on the west to Ferry street on the east, and from the Mohawk River on the north to the low-lands on the south. It was divided into four blocks, or squares, and these were subdivided into house-lots. Van Curler's lot was at the corner of Church and Union streets, the present site of Union Classical Institute. The entire area of the village was inclosed and fortified with stockades, or palisades. The streets were laid out regular and at right angles. They were named:

1. Handelaers (Traders) street. The name was changed in 1690 to Lion street, and at the close of the Revolutionary War to Washington street (now Washington avenue).

2. Front street, which still retains the name, and was so called because it was next to the river.

3. Ferry street, which retains its name, and was so called because at the foot of it was the landing place for boats.

4. Church street, which still bears the same name, and was so called because the earliest church (Reformed Dutch) was built at its southern termination.

5. Niskayuna street. This is now known as Union street.

6. Albany street. After the massacre of 1690, the

name was changed to Martelaers (Martyrs) street. It is now known as State street.

The alluvial tract of arable land (Dutch, bouwland) extending from the river and State street on the north to the sand bluff on the south, and from the line of Centre street (continued) on the east to the hills west of the first lock on the canal, comprising an area of several hundred acres, was called the Great Flat (Groote Vlachte). When it first came into the possession of Europeans, it was mainly cleared land, and its fertile soil had for many years been cultivated by the native Mohawks.

The influence of Van Curler was strongly felt, and always for good, not only in the settlement which he had formed, but far more widely. In 1664, when the New Netherlands came into the possession of the English, he was consulted with great deference in regard to the policy to be pursued with the Indians. Two years later, his humanity appeared in rescuing from threatened starvation the French soldiers under Courcelles, who, starting from Montreal, made an unsuccessful expedition against the Mohawks. In 1667, while on a journey to Canada, in compliance with a friendly invitation from the French governor, Tracy, having embarked in a canoe to cross Lake Champlain,

he was overtaken by a storm and drowned. He left no children. His widow continued to reside at Schenectady until her death, in 1675.

Of the original settlers of Schenectady, all were natives of Holland except one, Alexander Lindsay Glen. He was a native of Scotland, but leaving that country as a refugee, he found an asylum in Holland, whence he emigrated to the New Netherlands. In 1665, he received a patent for some land which he had purchased on the north side of the Mohawk, and on which he had erected a mansion of stone. Retaining a warm affection for his native country, he named his estate Scotia (Latin for Scotland). From him, also, came the subsequent name of the township of Glenville.

The area of land originally purchased by the settlers of Schenectady soon proved insufficient to meet the wants of the increasing population. In 1672, they purchased additional lands from the Indians and made application to the Governor and Council for a patent, but this was for some time denied, for the alleged reason that permission had not been first obtained from the Governor to buy the land, and that full information of the premises was not given. Besides, some obstacles were interposed by the Mohawks themselves. Finally, in 1684, the settlers obtained from Governor

Dongan the desired patent for the ancient township of Schenectady. This patent confirmed and secured to them a territory of 128 square miles, being 16 miles in length by 8 in breadth, including the present area of Schenectady city and the towns of Rotterdam and Glenville.

Schenectady, as is shown above, was patented as a township with certain municipal rights in 1684. It was chartered as a borough in 1765, and incorporated as a city March 26, 1798. The extensive area comprised within the city limits was divided into four wards: the first including all the compact portion of the city between Union street and the Mohawk River; the second, that part south of Union street and including a small portion of the bouwland; the third, what is now the town of Rotterdam; the fourth, what is now the town of Glenville. In course of time it became evident that one municipal government was not adapted to the wants of the increasing population, with their diverse interests, the inhabitants of the third and the fourth ward being engaged mainly in agriculture. Accordingly, in compliance with the general petition of the people, the legislature, in 1820, passed an act by which the third ward was set off and became the town of Rotterdam, and the fourth ward was set off and became the town of Glenville.

At various times in its early history, Schenectady suffered from the attacks of the French and the Indians. The most memorable of these attacks was in February, 1690. The causes which led to it were connected with the political changes in England, where the arbitrary king, James II., had been driven from the throne (November, 1688), and William and Mary had begun to reign (February, 1689). The great majority of the people on this side of the ocean favored the new order of things. With their support and in the name of the new sovereigns, the government of New York had been assumed by Jacob Leisler, a wealthy merchant and captain of the militia. The people of Schenectady were strongly Leislerian in their sympathies, and were bitterly opposed to those who had held office under King James. John Alexander Glen, the commander of the place and justice of the township, then residing at Scotia, was not allowed even to enter the village; and, contrary to his advice that a strict guard should be maintained, they left the gates unguarded except by images of snow, which they had placed there as sentinels. Schenectady is said to have had at this time about 80 houses and 400 inhabitants. The village was mainly west of Ferry street, and was protected by palisades. There were two gates, one at the north end of Church street, the other at the south end, opening out to the Albany road. There was,

also, near what is now the corner of Washington and Front streets, a fort garrisoned by 24 men. After the destruction of this fort, another one was built on the spot where now is the junction of Front, Ferry, and Green streets. In order to understand the circumstances connected with the attack on Schenectady, we must bear in mind that a portion of the Iroquois had been proselyted by Jesuit missionaries, who induced them to remove to Canada, where they settled at a place (a few miles above Montreal) called Caughnawaga, or Sault Saint Louis. It was under these circumstances that an expedition was sent by the French from Canada, with the intention of striking a blow at Albany or Schenectady. Of the various accounts, English and French, the most reliable appears to be the one written by Mons. de Monseignat, Comptroller-General of the Marine in Canada. The following extract from his report includes the most important part of the account.

"News arrived at Quebec of the success of the first party that had gone out against the English, and which had been organized at Montreal. It might have consisted of 210 men, to-wit: of 80 Indians of the Sault and the mountain, 16 Algonquins and the remainder Frenchmen. It was commanded by Lieutenants Le Moyne de Sainte Hélène and Daillebout de Mantet.

"Having taken their departure from Montreal, after a march of five or six days, they called a council to determine the course they should take, and the point they considered themselves in a condition to attack. The Indians demanded of the French what was their intention. Messieurs de Sainte Hélène and de Mantet replied that they started in the hope of attacking Orange, if possible, as it is the capital of New York and a place of considerable importance, though they had no orders to that effect, but generally to act according as they should judge on the spot of their chances of success, without running too much risk. This appeared to the Indians somewhat rash. They represented the difficulties and the weakness of the party for so desperate an undertaking.

"As the Indians, who had perfect knowledge of the localities and more experience than the French, could not be brought to consent, it was determined to postpone coming to a conclusion until the party should arrive at the spot where the two paths separate — the one leading to Orange and the other to Corlard [Schenectady]. In the course of this march, which occupied eight days, the Frenchmen judged proper to diverge toward Corlard, according to the advice of the Indians, and that road was taken without calling a new council.

Nine days more elapsed before they arrived, having experienced inconceivable difficulties, and having been obliged to wade up to their knees in water and to break the ice with their feet in order to find a solid footing.

"At eleven of the clock at night, they came within sight of the town, resolved to defer the assault until two o clock of the morning. But the excessive cold admitted of no further delay. The town of Corlard forms a sort of oblong with only two gates, one opposite where our party had halted, the other opening toward Orange, which is only six leagues distant. Messieurs de Sainte Hélène and de Mantet were to enter at the first, which was found wide open. Messieurs d'Iberville and de Montesson took the left with another detachment, in order to make themselves masters of that leading to Orange. But they could not discover it, and returned to join the remainder of the party. A profound silence was everywhere observed, until the two commanders, who separated after having entered the town, for the purpose of encircling it, met at the other extremity.

"The signal of attack was given Indian fashion, and the entire force rushed on simultaneously. M. de Mantet placed himself at the head of one detachment and reached a small fort where the garrison was under arms.

The gate was burst in after a good deal of difficulty, the whole set on fire, and all who defended the place were slaughtered. The sack of the town began a moment before the attack on the fort. Few houses made any resistance. The massacre lasted two hours. The remainder of the night was spent in placing sentinels and in taking some rest. The house belonging to the minister [Rev. Peter Tassemaker] was ordered to be saved, so as to take him alive to obtain information from him; but as it was not known, it was not spared any more than the others. He was killed in it and his papers were burnt before he could be recognized.

"At daybreak some men were sent to the dwelling of Mr. Coudre [John Alexander Glen], who was major of the place, and who lived at the other side of the river. He was not willing to surrender, and put himself on the defensive with his servants and some Indians; but as it was resolved not to do him any harm, in consequence of the good treatment that the French had formerly experienced at his hands, M. d'Iberville and the Great Mohawk proceeded thither alone, promised him quarter for himself, his people and his property, whereupon he laid down his arms on their assurance, entertained them in his fort, and returned with them to see the commandants in the town.

"In order to occupy the Indians, who would otherwise have taken to drink and thus rendered themselves unable for defense, the houses had already been set on fire. None were spared in the town but one belonging to Coudre, and that of a widow who had six children, whither M. de Montigny had been carried when wounded. All the rest were burnt. The lives of between fifty and sixty persons, old men, women and children, were spared, they having escaped the first fury of the attack; also some thirty Iroquois, in order to show them that it was the English, and not they, against whom the grudge was entertained."

The French lost but two men at the attack on the town; but their return to Canada was attended with great hardships and the loss of 19 more men. Of the inhabitants of Schenectady, 60 were slain in the massacre, 27 were carried into captivity, one (or possibly more) escaped to Albany, and the remainder probably fled for refuge to their friends and neighbors who were settled along the river.

The destruction of the village and the subsequent dangers from the French and Indians discouraged the settlers in attempting to rebuild their houses and cultivate the ground. Nevertheless, as it was important that this frontier post should be maintained, a garrison

was sent by the Governor, and the place was somewhat restored. In the wars between France and England, the settlers of the Mohawk Valley suffered long and severely. In 1748, toward the close of what is called the Old French War, Schenectady met with the greatest loss that it had experienced at any one time since 1690. At a place called Beukendaal, in the present town of Glenville and three miles from Schenectady, about 40 persons were drawn into an ambuscade of French and Indians, and 26 of them were killed.

Schenectady was in its early days largely indebted for its prosperity to transportation, especially by the Mohawk River. By the original grant, trade had been restricted; but in 1727, by the decision of the highest court, the restrictions were removed, and from that time onward the commerce of the place rapidly increased. Schenectady being situated at the foot of navigation on the Mohawk, there was a portage of sixteen miles by way of the Albany and Schenectady turnpike between the Binne Kill and the Hudson River. Above Schenectady there were many rifts, or rapids, necessitating severe labor or portage. Up to the year 1740, the early settlers used the largest-sized Indian bark canoe for transporting merchandise; but about that time this was superseded by the small batteau, a

wooden vessel, sharp at both ends and generally manned by three men. In the history of Schoharie county it is stated that "these boats were forced over the rapids in the river with poles and ropes, the latter drawn by men on the shore. Such was the mode of transporting merchandise and Indian commodities to and from the west for a period of fifty years and until after the Revolution. A carrying-place in use at an early day was at Fort Stanwix [the present site of Rome], from the boatable waters of the Mohawk to Wood Creek; thence passing into Oneida Lake, the batteau proceeded into the Oswego River, and thence to Oswego on Lake Ontario, and to Niagara and elsewhere on that lake or the St. Lawrence, as they pleased to venture." After being carried around the Falls of Niagara to Chippewa, they went uninterruptedly on to Detroit, their usual limit, and sometimes even to Mackinaw.

CHAPTER II.

LATER HISTORY OF SCHENECTADY.

The later history of Schenectady is here considered as beginning with the Revolutionary War; and for convenience we may continue the narrative of commercial progress. After the Revolutionary War, the increasing emigration to the western part of the country required increased facilities for transportation and communication. Gen. Philip Schuyler, who was then Surveyor-General of the State of New York, succeeded in forming a corporate body known as the Inland Navigation Company, of which body many citizens of Schenectady and its vicinity were members. This company constructed a short canal at Wood Creek, uniting it with the navigable waters of the Mohawk, and also built a short canal and several locks at Little Falls, in both cases avoiding the necessity of portage or of unloading the vessels.

These works having been completed in 1795, additional wharves, docks and storehouses were built along the Main Binne Kill at Schenectady, and the commerce of the place was rapidly increased. To meet the wants

of the growing commerce, an improved style of boat, called the Durham, was brought into use. This boat was, in shape, somewhat like the modern canal-boat, with broad, flat bottom, straight sides, and a mast with square sails. The carrying capacity of the Durham boat was from eight to twenty tons. Most of these boats used on the Mohawk and further west were built at Schenectady.

In 1819, a destructive fire swept away the best business portion of Schenectady, including the extensive wharves and freighting establishments, along the Main Binne Kill, together with many valuable dwellings and stores on Washington street (now avenue), and on Union, Church, State, and Front streets. This portion of the city never regained its commercial importance, as the construction of the Erie canal (begun in 1817 and completed in 1825) and of railroads centering at another point, caused the transfer of business to its present location, while the territory that had suffered from the conflagration was rebuilt with private residences. In 1808 the original Mohawk bridge was erected at the foot of Washington street. It was designed by the celebrated bridge architect, Theodore Burr, and was considered a masterpiece of skill. Its original symmetry and beauty were afterward greatly

marred by the addition of several piers and ungraceful coverings. In 1874, it was replaced by a new bridge, built on the same piers.

Railroad communication forms a most important feature in the commerce of Schenectady. The first two railroads constructed in the State centered here, the Mohawk and Hudson in 1831, and the Schenectady and Saratoga in 1832; and the first road of any length, or that belongs to the vast system now connecting the seacoast and the great west, was built from Schenectady to Utica in 1836. A bill having been passed by the legislature in 1826 incorporating the Mohawk and Hudson River Railroad Company, the road was completed from Albany to Schenectady in 1831. In the following year a railroad was completed from Schenectady to Saratoga. The Utica and Schenectady railroad was completed in 1836, and the Schenectady and Troy branch in 1842. In 1853 the different railroads between Albany and Buffalo were consolidated, thus forming the New York Central railroad; and in 1869 this was consolidated with the Hudson River railroad. In 1872, the Schenectady and Duanesburgh railroad was completed, running from Schenectady to Quaker Street, and connecting at that place with the Albany and Susquehanna railroad. In 1883, the New York, West Shore and

Buffalo railroad was built. It passes through the western part of the county and has a station at South Schenectady, about three miles from the city. The Boston, Hoosac Tunnel and Western railroad was built in 1884. It passes through the town of Glenville, crossing the Mohawk River about six miles west of Schenectady. It forms a junction with the West Shore railroad in the town of Rotterdam, about eight miles west of the city.

The superior facilities thus afforded by the different railroads and the canal have given the city of Schenectady great advantages as a distributing center, and have greatly promoted the growth of manufacturing interests. The Schenectady Locomotive Works, established in 1848, manufacture all kinds of locomotives and employ about 1,100 men. The Westinghouse Company manufacture extensively agricultural machines. For many years the construction of steam boilers and engines was a prominent industry. During recent years three knitting mills have been started into operation, and the manufacture of wire has reached large proportions. The extensive works formerly owned by the Jones Car Company now form an important branch of the Gilbert Car Works of Troy. From West Troy came a branch industry, Roy's Shawl Factory, which has furnished employment to many operatives. The

recent removal of the Edison Electric Works from New York city to Schenectady has brought a very important addition to the industries of the place. A very recent period of time has witnessed, in Schenectady, many public improvements: In 1872, the introduction of a water supply, taken from the Mohawk River, the water-works being under control of a private corporation till November, 1885, when they were purchased by the city; in 1880, the erection of a new city hall; in 1885, the building of a new passenger station for the New York Central and Hudson River railroad, and the construction of a system of flush-sewers; in February, 1886, the introduction of electric lights for streets and buildings; and in 1887, the construction of a line of horse railway from the Mohawk Bridge to Brandywine avenue. These improvements have brought with them a large increase in the population of the city and in the value of real estate.

Schenectady, as shown above, has borne an honorable record for stability and progress in the various arts of peace. Her record is no less honorable in the achievements of war. In 1755, at the battle of Fort George, between the English and the French, the English commander, Sir William Johnson, says in his official report: "The Schenectady officers and men fought

like lions." During the Revolutionary War, the soldiers from Schenectady were conspicuous for their courage and patriotism, shown on many a hard-fought field, as at Oriskany, Saratoga, Monmouth, and Yorktown. In the war of 1812, although but one regular company was organized here, many from this vicinity enlisted in regiments belonging to other localities. In the great Civil War, Schenectady County answered promptly to the call for volunteers, and no other county in the State furnished more men in proportion to its population to defend the Union.

CHAPTER III.

THE TOWNSHIP OF NISKAYUNA.

Niskayuna, the smallest township in Schenectady County, was first settled by white men, about the year 1664. It is said to have derived its name from Co-nis-ti-gio-ne, the Indian term signifying "extensive corn-flats." A tribe of Indians bearing that name occupied this region when it was first settled by the whites. The present township was erected from Watervliet, Albany County, March 7, 1809, and had at that time a population of about 700. The population is at present a little over 1,000.

The shape of Niskayuna is that of an irregular oblong. A line drawn parallel with the river, from the north-east to the south-east corner of the township, would show its greatest length and be a little less than 7 miles long. Niskayuna is bounded on the north by the town of Glenville and Saratoga County, on the east by Saratoga County, on the south by Albany County, and on the west by the town of Rotterdam and the city of Schenectady. The surface is mostly upland. A wide strip of fertile flat land skirts the river, and from this steep bluffs rise abruptly. For a short distance from the river valley, the soil is of hard, stiff clay, and somewhat swampy; further west and south, the soil is a rich, sandy loam and is highly productive.

The Mohawk River incloses the town on the north and east and, flowing the whole distance over a shallow and rocky bed, is celebrated for its beautiful scenery and excellence as a fishing-ground. The Lisha's Kill is a small stream which flows into the Mohawk in the south-eastern part of the town. Groot's Creek and Cowhorn Creek are also small streams flowing into the Mohawk at Schenectady.

Niskayuna is chiefly an agricultural region and produces broom-corn, grain, potatoes, and fruits in abundance. Extensive quarries of bluestone have been

opened in the northern and eastern parts of the town, and the building stone of excellent quality finds a ready market in the adjacent cities. With the Erie Canal passing along its northern part, and the Troy and Schenectady railroad traversing the entire length of the town, together with excellent roads and turnpikes, the products of Niskayuna find an easy outlet.

Aqueduct, on the line of the Troy and Schenectady railroad, is a small hamlet. Niskayuna, a pleasant village in the south-east corner of the town, and on the Troy and Schenectady turnpike, has about 175 inhabitants

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CHAPTER IV.

THE TOWNSHIP OF ROTTERDAM.

The township of Rotterdam was first settled by white men about the year 1661, and was named from the city of Rotterdam in Holland. The fertile river bottom-lands extending five miles westward from Schenectady were called by the early settlers the Bouwland, meaning good or fertile land, and all the land lying west of this tract was known as Woestina, or Wilderness. Rotterdam was formed from Schenectady, April 14, 1820, and was formerly the third ward of the city

Additional lands were taken from the city in 1853, and in 1865 a portion of the town was re-ceded to the city. Population in 1880, 2,326.

The shape of the town of Rotterdam is very irregular. A line drawn in a south-easterly direction from its extreme north-western point and extending to the Albany County line would be about 13 miles long and would pass near Pattersonville, Rotterdam Junction, and Mohawkville. The mean width of the town is about 5 miles. Rotterdam is bounded on the north by Glenville; on the east, by Glenville, the city of Schenectady, and Niskayuna; on the south, by Albany County and Princetown; on the west, by Princetown.

With the exception of the flats along the river, the surface is hilly and broken in the north and west, and level and sandy in the south and east. The sand plains of the south and east are considerably higher than the lands along the river. The highest hills are in the north and are probably about 300 feet above the water in the river. The soil of the river-bottoms is a deep alluvium; that of the hilly regions, clay and gravel, underlaid by slate and bluestone. The sandy region is not naturally productive, but must be enriched to secure good crops.

The streams of Rotterdam are numerous and important. The Mohawk River borders the town on its

northern and eastern boundary, and the Norman's Kill flows for a short distance through the south-western part. The Sand-sea Kill is a rapid stream and flows into the Mohawk at Pattersonville. The Platte Kill, flowing into the river 5 miles west of the city, is justly celebrated for its many waterfalls and the beauty of its scenery. The Poetens Kill and the Sweet Hill and Brandywine creeks are mill streams, which flow into the Mohawk at or near Schenectady.

Although the buildings of the Edison Electric Light Company and the Gilbert Car Company are located in the town of Rotterdam, they cannot properly be called Rotterdam industries, as the persons managing and operating them reside mostly in Schenectady. An oil-mill on the Poetens Kill manufactures linseed oil and tow; and, a mile lower down, the waters of the same stream turn a saw and grist mill. Schermerhorn's Mill is located near the city, on the Sweet Hill Creek. The agricultural products of Rotterdam are grain, hay, straw, potatoes, broom-corn, and fruit. The sandy portion of the town is devoted mainly to the cultivation of rye, the upland to hay, and on the flats much broom-corn is raised.

Rotterdam possesses abundant commercial advantages. The Erie Canal traverses the entire length of

the town on the north-east; the New York Central railroad crosses the south-east; the West Shore railroad crosses it centrally from north to south; the Schenectady and Duanesburgh railroad crosses from east to west; and the Boston, Hoosac Tunnel and Western railroad has its western terminus in the north.

Pattersonville, in the north-western part of Rotterdam, is a pleasant, growing village, and an important shipping point for farm produce by way of the Erie Canal and the West Shore railroad. Population, 100. Rotterdam Junction, the terminus of the Boston, Hoosac Tunnel and Western railroad, and the point where the latter joins the West Shore railroad, is about a mile and a half east of Pattersonville, and has about 200 inhabitants. South Schenectady, situated at the junction of the Schenectady and Duanesburgh and the West Shore railroads, is an important shipping point for farm produce, and has a large retail trade in coal. Population, about 75. Mohawkville, with the neighboring settlement known as Engine Hill, is in the south-eastern part of the town, and is the residence of many persons doing business in the city. It is a quiet, pleasant village, having about 150 inhabitants. Population of Engine Hill, 220.

CHAPTER V.

THE TOWNSHIP OF GLENVILLE.

The township of Glenville was first settled by white men in the year 1665, when the region lying in the vicinity of what is now known as the village of Scotia was granted to a Scotchman, named Alexander Lindsay Glen; and in his honor the town was also named. It is the only town in the county north of the Mohawk River. It was formed from the fourth ward of the city, April 14, 1820. Population, in 1880, 2,746.

The shape of the town of Glenville is that of a very irregular oblong. Its greatest length is from its north-western to its south-eastern corner, and extends a distance of about 12½ miles. It has a mean width of about 5 miles. Glenville is bounded on the north by Saratoga County; on the east by Saratoga County and Niskayuna; on the south by Niskayuna, the city of Schenectady, and Rotterdam, and on the west by Rotterdam and Montgomery County.

Glenville, like Rotterdam, is broken and hilly in the north and west, and nearly level in the south and east. The high hills of the west rise abruptly from the river

to the height of about 300 feet; from the top of this range of hills the land slopes toward the north and east, forming a long fertile valley in the north, and terminating in a long slope of sandy loam in the east. At intervals the river is bordered by broad stretches of alluvial flat lands. The soil of the uplands is mostly of clay, underlaid with slate and bluestone. Birdseye limestone is found in the extreme northern part.

The southern and western parts of Glenville are bordered by the Mohawk River. The Chaughtanoonda Creek is a rapid stream, which flows into the Mohawk at Hoffman's Ferry. The Crabb's Kill is an important mill-stream in the northern part of the town. The Aelplatts Creek, the largest stream in the town, rises in the north-eastern part and flows into the river in the south-east.

For many years the manufacture of brooms formed an important industry in the town of Glenville, especially at Scotia and along the river; but on account of western competition the business has greatly declined in value. There are two grist-mills in Glenville, one situated on Crabb's Kill, and the other in the eastern part, on the Aelplatts Creek. Glenville produces in abundance all kinds of grain, hay, straw, broom-corn, potatoes, and fruit. Much of the land of the southern

part is devoted to the raising of garden vegetables for the city market. Three lines of railroad cross the town: the New York Central through the south-western part; the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company's line through the eastern part, and the Boston, Hoosac Tunnel and Western through the southern part. Excellent roads and turnpikes also traverse the town in all directions.

Scotia, in the southern part, is a pleasant village within one mile of Schenectady, and has about 350 inhabitants. High Mills, in the north-east, has flouring-mills, and about 74 inhabitants. Glenville, in the north-west, is beautifully located in a fertile valley, and has about 200 inhabitants. Hoffman's Ferry, so named from a river ferry at this point, is a station on the New York Central railroad.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TOWNSHIP OF PRINCETOWN.

A portion of the land comprising what is now known as the township of Princetown was originally ceded to the Reformed Dutch Church, of Schenectady, and the remainder belonged by right of patent to George

Ingoldsby and Aaron Bradt, in the year 1737. It is not positively known just when the first settlement was made by white men, but the probable date is about 1700. Later, William Corry became proprietor and founded a settlement known as Corry's Bush, near the center of the town. Nothing remains of this settlement but the ruins of an old stone church and the mossy tombstones of the adjacent graveyard. The present township of Princetown was formed March 20, 1798, and was named in honor of James Prince, a member of assembly from Albany County and residing at Schenectady. Population in 1880, 826.

In shape, Princetown is long and narrow, its greatest length from north-west to south-east being about 10½ miles, and its greatest width about 3¾ miles. Princetown is bounded on the north by Montgomery County and Rotterdam, on the east by Rotterdam, on the south by Albany County and Duanesburgh, on the west by Duanesburgh. The surface consists of hilly upland, broken in many places by fertile valleys. The general slope of the ground is toward the south-east. The soil is mostly of clay, generally fertile, and is underlaid with slate and bluestone. Owing to its peculiar shape, Princetown has no streams of very great length. It touches the Mohawk at its north-easterly corner, and

the Sand-sea Kill finds a source in the north-west. The Platte Kill rises near the center, and the Norman's Kill crosses the town in the south at its widest part. There are, also, numerous small, rapid streams.

The inhabitants of Princetown are chiefly engaged in agricultural pursuits; hay and grain are raised in large quantities; much attention is also given to dairy farming, and there are two cheese factories in the town. With the exception of the Schenectady and Duanesburgh railroad, passing through the southern part of the town, Princetown has no special commercial advantages but the excellent highways which traverse its territory in every direction. Rynex Corners, in the central part, is a small hamlet and contains a cheese factory. Kelly's is a post-office and shipping point on the Schenectady and Duanesburgh railroad, and contains a cheese factory. Gifford's, in the southern part, is a small village and has a post-office.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TOWNSHIP OF DUANESBURGH.

Accounts of the early settlement of what is now known as the township of Duanesburgh are very

meagre. Although much land had been previously taken up, it was generally in large lots, and actual settlements were not made until about the year 1765, when Hon. James Duane, of New York, became possessed of a large area within the limits of the town and engaged with twenty German families to emigrate from Pennsylvania and settle on his domain. Owing to the establishment of an unpopular system of quit-rents, settlements were for a number of years greatly retarded. The present township was formed from parts of Schoharie and Albany Counties, and was first recognized as a township in the year 1788, March 22. Population in 1880, 2,995.

Besides being the most westerly, Duanesburgh is the largest town in Schenectady County. Its shape is that of an irregular triangle. A line drawn from its north-east to its south-west corner would show its greatest extent and would be about 14 miles in length. Duanesburgh is bounded on the north by Montgomery County and Princetown, on the east by Princetown, on the south by Albany and Schoharie Counties, on the west by Schoharie and Montgomery Counties. The surface is broken and hilly. The highest land is found in the north-eastern part, whence the surface slopes in every direction. The soil is mostly clay and gravel, underlaid with slate and bluestone, and is generally fertile.

The Schoharie Creek borders the town for a long distance on its western boundary. The banks of the creek are high and precipitous. Many of the finest farms in Duanesburgh are on the slope leading to this stream. The Norman's Kill rises in the southern part of the town, flows in an easterly direction, and is an important mill-stream. Featherstonehaugh Lake, in the eastern part, is a beautiful sheet of pure spring water, covering an area of about 75 acres. Two miles north of this lake is a large body of water known as Maria Pond. This was formed by damming back the waters of the outlet of the lake, and it is an excellent reservoir for the mills on the Chuctanunda Creek, which has its source in this pond.

The inhabitants of Duanesburgh are chiefly engaged in farming, but manufacturing is carried on to quite an extent, especially at Quaker Street, where boots and shoes and carriages are made. There are several saw-mills and one grist-mill on the Norman's Kill; and the same may be said of the Chuctanunda Creek. The farm products include hay and all kinds of grain, especially oats and buckwheat. Much of the land is well adapted to pasturage, and dairy farming is carried on with success. The people living in the northern part of the town have no means of transportation except by wagon

roads, which are numerous and well kept. The southern part is crossed by the main line of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company's railroad, and by the Schenectady branch of the same. The Western Turnpike crosses the town near the centre.

Quaker Street, in the southern part of the town, is the largest and most important village. It is divided into two parts, known as Quaker Street on the Hill, and Quaker Street Depot. The former is the seat of the manufactories above mentioned and has about 316 inhabitants; the latter is an important shipping point and the terminus of the Schenectady and Duanesburgh railroad. It has about 310 inhabitants. Duanesburgh, in the south, is a village of about 70 inhabitants and is a station on the Schenectady branch of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company's railroad. On the Western Turnpike, about 2 miles north-west of this village, is a plat of 10 acres, originally set apart by Judge Duane for a town center. At present it is known by the name of Duanesburgh Churches, and contains an Episcopal and a Presbyterian church and a few houses. Mariaville, in the north-eastern part of the town, on Maria Pond and at the source of the Chuctanunda Creek, has a beautiful location and contains a grist-mill and several other mills. It has about 100 inhabitants. Braman's

Corners and Eaton's Corners are hamlets in the north-western part of the town. The former has a population of about 80.

CHAPTER VIII.

EDUCATION.

The early inhabitants of Schenectady, true to their inherited character, founded and maintained with zealous care the institutions of religion and of education. In 1784, Dirck Romeyn became pastor of the First Reformed Dutch Church at Schenectady. Under his leadership in that year a meeting of the citizens was called, to take measures to found an academy. The academy building was soon after erected, on the north-west corner of Union and Ferry streets. The institution prospered for years; but its founders contemplated greater things, and largely through the influence of Domine Romeyn and General Philip Schuyler, a charter was obtained by which in 1795 Union College was founded. With great liberality the academy building and endowments were then given to the trustees of Union College, the building to be sold and the proceeds used to procure a more convenient building. Such building was erected on the

north-east corner of Union and College streets, its original cost (including that of the site) being $60,000. In 1815, it was sold to the city and county, the college receiving in payment 3,000 acres of land, located in different parts of Schenectady County. In 1831, it was re-purchased by the college for $10,000, and in 1854 it was re-sold to the city for $6,000. It is now known as the "Union School" building. At an early period it became evident that the growth of the college would require more spacious accommodations, and a tract of about 250 acres was secured on what is now known as College Hill. New buildings were begun there in 1812, and on that site the present college buildings are located.

Union College was incorporated by the Regents of the University of the State of New York February 25, 1795. It was the second college incorporated in the state, and the first north of the city of New York, and west of the Hudson River. It received its name from the circumstance that several religious denominations co-operated in its organization, and was the first college in the United States which was not of a strictly denominational character.

The first president of Union College was the Rev. John Blair Smith, who was elected in 1795, and resigned

in 1799, only a few months before his death. He was succeeded by Jonathan Edwards, the younger, who died in 1801. The Rev. Jonathan Maxey, previously president of Brown University, succeeded Doctor Edwards, and resigned at the end of two years. In 1804 the Rev. Eliphalet Nott was elected president of Union College, which office he held until his death, on the 29th day of January, 1866. The Rev. Laurens P. Hickok, a graduate of the college, who had long acted as vice-president, was elected his successor. He resigned in 1868. The Rev. Charles A. Aiken succeeded Doctor Hickok in 1869, and resigned in 1871. The Rev. Eliphalet Nott Potter was elected president in 1871, and inaugurated June 20, 1872. On his resignation, in 1884, the Hon. Judson S. Landon, LL. D., was appointed president *ad interim*, and still holds that office.

Union College acquired by its charter, granted in 1795, full university powers, but the creation of post-graduate institutions at Schenectady was not found practicable. Schools of law and medicine, and also an astronomical observatory, have long existed at Albany, only a few miles distant.

The arrangement naturally suggested by these circumstances was, that the professional schools and the observatory at Albany should be united with Union

College, under the charter and board of trustees of the latter. This was accordingly effected by the incorporation of Union University in 1873. The Albany College of Pharmacy was created by the Board of Regents, June 21, 1881, and incorporated as a department of the university August 21 of the same year.

An important era in the educational history of Schenectady began in 1816, with the introduction of what was called the "Lancaster School System," of which some of the leading features were that instruction was given from cards suspended on the walls, a whole class learning at one time from the same card, and that monitors from the higher classes were engaged during part of their time in the work of instructing the lower classes. This method continued mainly in use till 1854. In that year the present free school system went into operation, the board of education being organized with two commissioners from each of the four wards of the city. The west college building (now known as the Main Union School building, on the corner of College and Union streets) having been purchased in January, 1855, rooms were prepared to accommodate about 450 pupils, and five teachers were appointed. The school was formally opened October 13, 1855, but the number of pupils far exceeded expectation, and the school was

closed for three weeks, in order to provide more room. In April, 1856, there were a superintendent and 18 teachers in the employ of the board.

In 1872 the classical department of the Union School was removed to the Delavan building, on the corner of Church and Union streets, where it is now located, and known as the Union Classical Institute. It furnishes a three years' course of classical and high school education. The fifth ward school building was also erected in 1872, the Park Place building in 1877, and the Nott Terrace building in 1883. At present (1887) the city has a complete system of graded schools, with a superintendent, 43 teachers, and about 2,500 pupils.

The public school records of the state of New York show that by an act of the legislature passed in 1843 the boards of supervisors of the several counties were directed to appoint county superintendents of common schools. The office thus created was abolished in 1847, and the schools were then placed under the supervision of town superintendents. The act creating the elective office of school commissioner was passed in 1856, and the first election by its terms was held in November, 1859, for the term of three years. The first incumbents of the new office were, therefore, appointive.

The duties of a school commissioner are to examine and license persons to teach; to visit all schools in his district as often in each year as shall be practicable; to hold annually a teachers' institute in his county; to see to the distribution of school blanks and registers among the school districts of his territory; to collect the trustees' annual reports for his annual report to the state superintendent; to apportion the state school moneys among his districts; and to amend, if necessary, the records of school district boundaries. While the commissioner has general charge of school interests, his labor can be much aided by efficient trustees. The duties of trustees are as follows: To call special district meetings; to make out the district tax-lists; to have the custody of the school-house and site; to contract with and employ teachers; and to pay teachers by orders on the supervisor or the district collector. They have the power to expend twenty dollars in any one school year upon essential school repairs, and may in addition provide for building fires and cleaning the school-room. They have the right to permit the school-room to be used by others when the school is not in session. They can admit non-resident pupils upon any terms agreed upon or as seen fit; and they must report annually to the school commissioner.

The towns of this county contain sixty school districts in which school-houses are located within the town boundaries. In addition, there are nine districts known as joint, in which the school-houses are in adjoining counties, but part of the district boundaries within this county. Outside of the joint districts, the number of school-houses in each town is as follows: Duanesburgh, 22; Glenville, 14; Rotterdam, 13; Princetown, 7; Niskayuna, 4. Of the entire number, 47 are built of wood, 11 of brick, and 2 of stone.

The number of teachers who find employment each school year in the town schools of this county is about one hundred. This shows that teachers are changed in many schools from term to term. A present average of those schools which employ teachers for the school year would hardly amount to more than one-third of the whole number of schools. An evident improvement is seen in regard to the qualifications of teachers. This appears in the interest and attendance at teachers' institutes and associations, in a general subscription to educational papers an awakening interest in a course of professional reading, and especially in the practice in the school-room of improved methods of instruction. The tendency of the age to make a profession of teaching, the district school not excepted, deserves the earnest encouragement of every friend of education.

At present, all but four of the town schools have a sole trustee. The sole trustee system works much better in practice than where divided responsibility exists. Of the town schools three have two departments each for primary and more advanced instruction. These are located at Scotia, and upper and lower Quaker Street. The next largest attended schools are at the following locations: Duanesburgh, at Braman's Corners and Mariaville; Glenville, districts No. 3, 10, 14, 15 and 16, last at Glenville Corners; Rotterdam, districts No. 2, 3, 4, 10 (Mohawkville), 11 (South Schenectady); Princetown, districts No. 6 (Pattersonville), and 7; Niskayuna, districts No. 1 (Aqueduct), 2 and 4, last at Niskayuna station. The smallest attended schools are in districts No. 20, 21 and 23 of Duanesburgh; 6 of Rotterdam; 5 and 9 of Glenville; 3 and 4 of Princetown. The consolidation of weaker districts is seldom possible owing to intervening distances, and when occasionally practicable is apt to be earnestly opposed. The subject will probably not be adjusted until the substitution of the township for the district system.

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